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8 April 1966

A THEORY OF WINNING

By

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT
(Thesis)

A Theory of Winning

by

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
8 April 1966

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SUMMARY

Purpose

The recent proliferation of efforts to redefine the meaning of winning has led to a wide variety of conclusions. Most efforts implicitly or explicitly assume that a revised concept of winning is required by two major developments: (1) the capability of nations to wage general nuclear war; and (2) the apparent trend to limit current and future wars--in large part to avoid the destruction which would result from a general nuclear war. It is the purpose of this thesis to determine what the concept of winning really is, and to what extent the concept is useful when applied to military conflicts in the modern international world.

Discussion

Winning is readily defined as the attainment of the objectives of a nation involved in international conflict. The definition focuses attention immediately on objectives, which must be known before an assessment of winning is practicable. But the nature and characteristics of objectives often make it difficult to define them in precise, measurable terms.

The nature and possible consequences of military action demands that particular emphasis be placed on the clear statement of military objectives; it is recognized, however, that military objectives are subordinate to political objectives, which, because of their own nature, are often not so amenable to the clear, precise statement demanded for military objectives.

Political objectives in a modern democratic state, such as the United States, are derived from a wide consensus of the people. By the electoral, legislative, and administrative processes, they are translated into criteria by which executive agencies plan government action, and execute the plans.

But military action is only a means to achieve political goals. Institutional arrangements set by the Constitution charge the President and his executive agents with the planning and execution of military action in accordance with broad rules set by legislation. Military objectives, set by the President in accordance with political objectives, should be precise and measurable; but they also demand that a prior determination be made that military force is appropriate and necessary in achievement of the political goals.

Experience in three conflicts sheds some light on winning. In World War II, the political objective of unconditional surrender also became a military objective. It was clearly stated, and the point of winning was readily apparent. But had the atomic bomb not been available, achievement of the unconditional surrender of Japan would have resulted in high personnel losses; a conditional surrender might have been acceptable, and attainable, at much lower cost. In the Korean War, political objectives were twice changed because of the capabilities of the military forces employed. Limitation of the war resulted in an armistice, which even now leaves a confrontation of military forces in place, thus blurring the concept of military victory. In the current war in Vietnam, political objectives and political considerations restrict even more the choice of feasible military strategies. Here, and perhaps in similar conflicts in the future, the dominance of the political objective requires such a change in the nature of military objectives, that winning in the classical sense is no longer applicable.

A prime objective of the United States is to prevent general nuclear war. In the event of such a war, however, the objective of defeating the opponent would seem clear, provided the capability of undertaking military action is preserved. In such a total war, winning could probably be readily determined.

Ideas of winning which end by equating winning to "freedom", or which define winning as a return to the status quo ante do not seem to clarify the issue of the meaning of winning; emphasis seems to be directed more toward a statement of what proper objectives should be.

Conclusions

The thesis concludes that a definition of winning in terms of the attainment of objectives is valid and useful. It focuses attention on the requirement to define objectives clearly, and on the dominance of political objectives over military objectives, particularly in limited war. As the dominance of political objectives rises, they may shadow the importance of military objectives to such an extent that concern with military victory in certain situations is meaningless speculation.

Nevertheless, if all planners recognize winning for what it is, and realize that winning per se is sometimes of relatively little importance in a particular engagement within a broader conflict, they will be more apt to focus their attention more properly on the objectives and on the appropriate means of attaining them.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Writers on military subject have recently been devoting increased attention to the concept of victory, or "winning," as it is more popularly termed today. Numerous articles and other papers imply that the nature of "low intensity conflict short of general war" is so different from that of wars of the past--World War II, for example--that United States military planners must seek new criteria by which winning may be judged in a struggle such as that which now exists in Vietnam. At the other end of the scale, it is also usually held that the threat of worldwide devastation following the extensive use of nuclear weapons in a general war further contributes to the difficulties involved in deciding what constitutes a win. Some authors suggest that the destruction resulting from a massive nuclear exchange between two parties would mean that both sides lose--that there is no winner; except, perhaps, third parties who were not damaged in the exchange.

Recent efforts to determine the meaning of winning current international conflicts have led to a variety of conclusions. One writer, for example, concludes that winning results in a return to the status quo ante bellum.¹ Another equates winning with "Freedom".²

¹Leilyn M. Young, "'Win'--Its Meaning," Military Review, Vol. XLVI, Jan. 1966, pp. 30-39.

²Robert B. Rigg, "What Does it Mean to Win," Army, Vol. 16, Feb. 1966, pp. 46-49.

These efforts are, of course, directed toward the solution of a very real problem. There have been vast military and non-military changes in the world in the last twenty years. Methods of waging war or otherwise settling international disagreement have changed, just as the characteristics of weapons and of disagreements have changed. Even more important, however, is the fact that many people have very real doubts and mental reservations as to the meaning or significance of winning or losing in current and future international struggles. One need only consider the circumstances surrounding the relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War, or the 1966 Senate hearings on the war in Vietnam, to be convinced of the sincere and far-reaching concern with this problem.

But the wide range of conclusions as to the meaning of winning seems to indicate that the problem is not yet solved. This thesis is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the problem and its solution.

It should be made clear at the outset of the discussion that it contains a certain bias of the author. The paper challenges to some extent any idea that present-day conflicts and modern weapons have changed in any fundamental way the age-old concept of victory, and particularly of military victory. "Low intensity conflict" is not a new kind of war; "peoples' wars" have been fought and commented on for hundreds of years. What is required today is not a new theory of war and victory, but at the most, a

restatement of well established principles and concepts in modern terms, together with an understanding of how these principles and concepts may be properly and effectively applied to present and future conflicts.

This thesis, then, is an effort to place in modern perspective the concept of winning a contest or struggle between or among nations. Although emphasis will be placed on military victory, the implications of a military struggle or of a military win in the modern world can obviously be discussed and understood only within the context of national goals and the entire international struggle. Thus, non-military aspects of the struggle, especially the political aspects, will become inextricably involved in the discussion.

The thesis is organized in the following manner. Chapter 2 is devoted to a definition of winning as it relates to the achievement of objectives, and to a general consideration of objectives themselves. Chapter 3 deals with the formulation of objectives in a democratic society such as the United States, and with certain aspects of the formulation and execution of plans. In Chapter 4, concepts developed in preceding chapters are analyzed in light of experience with recent and present conflicts. Chapter 5 contains conclusions about the extent to which winning is a useful concept in assessing results of action taken by a nation such as the United States when it becomes involved in current and future military conflicts.

CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF WINNING

WINNING: A DEFINITION

Thomas Hobbes, in constructing his masterpiece, Leviathan, stated that he ascribed

The first cause of absurd conclusions . . . to the want of method; in that they begin not their ratiocination from definitions; that is, from settled significations of their words: as if they could cast account, without knowing the value of the numeral words, one, two, and three.¹

This discussion seeks to avoid at least this cause of absurd conclusions by settling immediately upon a definition of winning. Winning, as used in this thesis, is defined as the achievement or attainment of the objectives sought by the application of the forces brought to bear in a struggle or conflict with other parties. It should be apparent that this is not a departure from the settled meaning of the word in the English language. It is true that Webster's Third International Dictionary² gives a variety of meanings for the word, including "victory". Synonyms for "victory" are "triumph" and "conquest". But the important thing is that throughout the accepted definitions of all these words runs the underlying thought of success in attaining an objective in some sort of struggle or contest.

¹Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 28.

²Webster's Third New International Dictionary, see word entries.

This definition of winning as the attainment of an objective is a general definition applicable to any struggle or contest. A military win or victory may be considered to be the achievement of the military objective in a struggle or contest involving the application of military force. Similarly, a political win is the achievement of a political objective in a contest involving the exercise of political power.

Use of this definition as a basis for analyzing winning in the modern world involves examination of (1) the forces, (2) the struggle in which they are applied, and (3) the objectives sought. Space does not, however, permit exhaustive treatment of all these elements; nor is it really necessary that they all be treated in detail, provided that critical points are not overlooked. Furthermore, as the thesis is concerned primarily with winning in the military application of power, certain aggregations of the elements are desirable for clarity.

Forces may in general be divided into military forces and non-military forces. The latter includes political, economic, psycho-social, demographic and other like forces or elements of power.

The struggle or contest to be considered is one in the international arena; and it is one in which military force is employed at some point, whether it be an active or potential application. Thus, if the mere existence of military force deters an opponent from action, it may be considered to be as much an application of

force as the more apparent "show of force" or actual combative action.

Objectives, for reasons to be shown later, are usefully divided into military objectives and political objectives. Because of the nature of international relations, political objectives are considered here to include economic, social, and similar categories of objectives, which might elsewhere be separated more precisely from strictly political objectives.

Although all of these elements are important, discussion in this chapter will be limited to a consideration of objectives for a number of reasons.

First, the adopted definition of winning focuses attention on the objectives--specifically, on the nature of the objective in a contest, and on the possibility of its attainment. It must be assumed that action taken in the course of an international conflict is in fact directed toward the attainment of some objective. If it does not, the action is aimless, and lies beyond the scope of this discussion.

Second, this thesis is not devoted primarily to a consideration of strategy. Therefore, detailed considerations of forces and the ways in which they are employed are most relevant only as they relate to the following consideration of objectives, or as they appear in the context of planning and real situations in the next two chapters.

Last, the nature of recent, current, and probable or possible future conflicts has been so well described elsewhere, that it is

assumed to be well known--at least in general terms.³ It is, therefore, considered here only in the detail required by the course of the discussion.

The following discussion of objectives is divided into two parts. First, the general nature and characteristics of objectives are examined; then the relationship of political and military objectives is explored.

WINNING: THE OBJECTIVES

General

Just as it was important to settle upon a definition of winning, it is necessary to understand what is meant by an objective. This is not so much true of a definition; it may be assumed that most people readily recognize the current use of the word to mean a goal, an end, an aim of action, or an object. It is much more important, however, to be aware of the characteristics or natures of the things which are often established or represented as being objectives. These characteristics not only affect the actions and forces required to achieve the objectives; they may also determine the feasibility of planning for the attainment of objectives, and the possibility of attaining them. Although it

³See, for example, Robert E. Osgood, Limited War; David Galula, Counter-Insurgency Warfare; and Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy.

will become important later, it is not necessary now to consider the inherent worth of objectives--that is, whether they are good or bad in themselves.

The following list illustrates some of the criteria by which the characteristics of objectives might be distinguished:

- (1) long range and short range objectives,
- (2) final and intermediate objectives,
- (3) continuing and finite (temporary) objectives,
- (4) concrete (mensurable) and abstract (immensurable) objectives,
- (5) constant and changeable objectives,
- (6) planned and forced objectives,
- (7) positive and negative objectives.

The above bases for possible distinctions in characteristics of objectives was developed--or become apparent--during the course of research, and is not intended to be comprehensive. The list presented here might be expanded, contracted, or otherwise refined if precise criteria were desired for a particular situation.

It should be noted, and kept in mind throughout the discussion, that the distinctions formulated to describe the varying nature and characteristics of objectives are not absolutely precise or mutually exclusive. The actual nature of an objective might be anywhere between the extremes; and the distinctions themselves tend to overlap. This is particularly important when one realizes that objectives are viewed differently from different positions in the political and military organizations.

In spite of the seeming imprecision among the distinctions listed, and the impracticability of fitting real world objectives precisely into a single category, the distinctions do appear to be useful for conceptual investigation. Each of them merits a few words of explanation and elaboration.

Long range and short range objectives. Some objectives may be attainable only after the lapse of a great amount of time; or limited resources may prevent their attainment in the near future. Other objectives may by comparison be readily and promptly available by expending resources immediately available. In the first case, all action to attain long range objectives may be deferred to a later date, or the objective may be sought by a series of separable actions extending over a long period of time.

Although more will be said of the national purpose in the next chapter, it may be noted here that the national purpose is a long range objective, representing the long range mission or enduring aspirations of a nation.

As compared to this long range objective, the establishment of diplomatic relations with a newly independent nation could be regarded as a short range political objective.

Final and intermediate objectives. This distinction is related to the previous one, but is essentially different from it. Long range objectives are most apt to be final objectives, but, depending upon planning periods, and the ability of a planner to project trends and conditions of the future, they need not be final

objectives. Intermediate objectives, on the other hand, are those which are deliberately set as steps leading toward the attainment of longer range objectives.

To use the same examples cited before, the national purpose of a nation is not only a long range objective, but in a sense may be regarded as a final objective. The establishment of diplomatic relations with another nation is a clearly definable short range objective, but to the extent that this action contributes to the attainment of the national purpose, it could also be regarded as a more immediate, intermediate objective. To give another example, victory in a critical battle might be regarded as an intermediate objective contributing to the longer range objective of winning a war.

Continuing and finite (temporary) objectives. A continuing objective is one which is attainable and which is sought on a continuing basis. Well known examples of such objectives are the national security of a nation; the maintenance of individual liberty within a democratic society; the general welfare; and others such as those spelled out in the Preamble to the United States Constitution or in the Declaration of Independence.

Continuing objectives may be contrasted with those which, once attained, become merely a matter of history, and no longer serve as the bases for planning. An example might be the complete reconstruction of a devastated area.

It should be noted that continuing objectives of the sort mentioned above are in some respects "rules of the game." In many instances they have been attained--at least partially--even though certain continuing effort is required to maintain the environment in which they exist, or even to improve the degree of attainment. Many of the continuing objectives also serve as restraints on action which a nation feels it may properly take to reach other objectives.

Concrete (mensurable) and abstract (immensurable) objectives.

This distinction among characteristics of objectives is one of the most important for planners, and may be illustrated by such examples as the conclusion of a mutual defense treaty as opposed to the provision of "a better way of life." In the first instance, the signed treaty is proof of the attainment of the objective; but what constitutes "a better way of life"? There may be so much disagreement on the nature of the objective that too many incomparable alternatives for action present themselves; or, conceivably, people cannot tell whether the objective has been attained because there is no consensus on a standard by which the condition is to be evaluated.⁴

⁴One of the outstanding examples of disagreement on standards, for example, is the argument between Communist and democratic philosophers, each of which believes that his own system is the only standard by which freedom may be eventually judged.

Constant and changeable objectives. Although it is possible, at least in theory, to plan for the attainment of objectives which may change during the course of an operation, changeable objectives often pose more operational difficulties than those which remain constant:⁵ resources must be reallocated; new criteria must be established to judge success in obtaining the new objective; and often a whole new strategy must be undertaken from a position of disadvantage. These difficulties, however, should not be allowed to prevent a change of objectives when it becomes apparent that the first one was chosen improperly, or if the environment changes drastically.

The meaning of this distinction can be seen clearly by taking an analogy from the field of water resource development. Suppose that the operators of a dam, designed and built to satisfy the objectives of providing recreation facilities and water supply, are given a new objective of operating the dam for flood control purposes. The new objective could, in all probability, be achieved only by a heavy expenditure of funds for alterations; and even though the benefits accruing to downstream areas from the new objective might be high from a national viewpoint, the loss of recreational opportunities, and the expense of providing an alternate

⁵This distinction should be applied with caution. See the discussion on planned and forced objectives which follows, and the discussion of the Korean War in Chapter 4, infra. In the latter case, objectives were changed because of operational capabilities or difficulties.

source of water could be expected to have serious adverse effects locally.

This example refers, of course, to a situation in which the changed objective was deliberately planned. If the nature of the original objective is such that its change is due to outside agencies, the distinction tends to resemble the following one between planned and forced objectives.

Planned and forced objectives. A planner does not always have the option of deliberately and carefully choosing his objective. The action of an opponent who unexpectedly seizes the initiative, for example, may force the planner to select an immediate objective of defense or survival rather than active expansion of his influence.

Positive and negative objectives. This distinction is used here to differentiate between those objectives of action which are characterized by the active drive to make something happen, or bring about a certain condition, rather than action taken to prevent a certain event. It can be seen that in a certain sense this distinction parallels the military one between the strategic attack and the strategic defense; for example, to conquer another nation in order to annex its territory is a positive objective; to prevent war or conquest of one's own nation is a more negative kind of object.

Although other distinctions in the nature and characteristics of objectives could be formulated, it does not appear that further

refinement would be profitable in this general discussion of winning. The distinctions already discussed are sufficient to serve as a basis for a discussion of the formulation of objectives in the next chapter. Before beginning that discussion, however, it is important to note the relationship between political and military objectives.

Relationship of political and military objectives. "War is only a part of political intercourse, therefore by no means an independent thing in itself."⁶ "The subordination of the military point of view to the political is, therefore, the only thing which is possible."⁷

Although these words of Karl von Clausewitz in his On War are as true today as they were when the book was published in the early 19th Century, care should be taken to recognize the essential differences between political and military action and the objectives of such action. Political action can be undertaken by a wide variety of means, and can be directed toward the attainment of just as wide a variety of objectives. Military action, on the other hand, represents a specific means of attaining political ends, and is often, even usually, conducted in conjunction with other means. The critical difference is that military action is so extreme in its impact on peoples, and so abhorrent to free peoples, that a nation like the United States undertakes it only

⁶Karl von Clausewitz, On War, p. 596.

⁷Ibid., p. 598.

as a last resort. When a war is undertaken, there is a deep prejudice favoring the use of extraordinary resources to insure early victory at minimum cost in human lives and disruption of peaceful activities.

Thus, in war, the political objective often tends to be pushed into the background until military victory is achieved. As Clausewitz said,

War is an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will. . . .To impose our will upon the enemy is the object. To achieve this object with certainty we must disarm the enemy, and this disarming is by definition the proper aim of military action. It takes the place of the object and in a certain sense pushes it aside as something not belonging to war itself.⁸

Displacement of the political object of war by what seems to be a distinct aim of military action is critical to Clausewitz's theory and to this discussion. It implies that in some respects a military objective may be regarded as an intermediate goal leading toward a broader or more important objective, and that a military victory is only a step toward a larger victory.

With this thought in mind, the discussion can now turn to a consideration of the means by which political and military objectives can or should be formulated.

⁸Ibid., p. 3.

CHAPTER 3

THE FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES

This chapter deals with the formulation of political and military objectives in a democratic society such as the United States. The discussion can readily be divided into two parts: (1) consideration of the basis for planning in a model democratic state; and (2) application of the model to the United States.

PLANNING IN A MODERN DEMOCRATIC STATE

The late Professor V. O. Key, former Professor of Government at Harvard University, once observed that:

The salient characteristics that differentiate democratic regimes from other sorts of power structures . . . include such matters as . . . the assumption that government should operate on a foundation of popular consent; the expectation of extensive consultation between governors and governed; freedom of dissent and criticism; the dispersion of points of authority and centers of initiative within the system; and in general, on extensive practice of give-and-take between governors and governed.¹

If this is accepted, it seems logical to assume that any model used to discuss planning for attainment of the broad political objectives of a modern democratic state should provide institutional arrangements which incorporate these characteristics to a significant degree.² The most satisfactory model for this

¹V. O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, p. 19.

²See, for example, A. D. Lindsay, The Modern Democratic State; and Ernest Barker, Reflections on Government.

purpose is one based on that presented by Arthur A. Maass, Professor of Government at Harvard University, in Chapter 15 of Design of Water-Resource Systems.³

This model starts with the people, and visualizes that community discussion leads eventually to a wide concensus on the general standards of common life. Then, by means of the electoral, legislative, and administrative processes (each involving discussion of greater and greater specificity), issues and areas of agreement are identified, and governmental action, when desired by the community, is carried out in accordance with the general standards.

The process is a dynamic one requiring continual reexamination of earlier standards and actions, and consultation among the various levels or processes of government. Thus, "the community's unique political function is to reach agreement on the standards of the common life--the objectives,"⁴ and "to foster a process of discussion which results in agreement on objectives and in a propensity to reexamine them."⁵ The electoral process selects the men to conduct and oversee the affairs of government; the legislative process "translates into rules of law the general programs endorsed by that body [the electorate];"⁶ and the administrative process

³Arthur A. Maass, "System Design and the Political Process: A General Statement," in Arthur Maass et al., Design of Water-Resource Systems.

⁴Ibid., p. 566.

⁵Ibid., p. 567.

⁶Ibid., p. 569.

translates the legislative rules into criteria for government action, and conducts governmental action in accordance with these criteria.

This is a general model, intended to apply to the full range of governmental planning. To see precisely how it may be applied to political and military planning in international affairs, it is easiest to consider the model in light of United States governmental institutions.

The people of the United States select by election the members of the legislative branch and the President, or executive. Through these elected representatives, they select the other key members of the executive branch, most of whom are nominated by the President for confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

In the process of setting objectives and planning for their achievement, the legislative and executive branches work through their own institutional arrangements; that is, through the standing and special committees of the U.S. Congress, and through the executive departments.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider in detail all of the elements of government which play a role in the formulation and carrying out of foreign policy. Only the roles of the major actors will be emphasized: the President, the Congress, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the appropriate military commanders and staff officers at the higher levels of the military organization.

Behind this governmental structure stands the electorate, and the entire body of the American people. From these people is derived the consensus on which broad objectives are based, and from which all other supporting or contributory objectives must also be determined.

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES IN THE UNITED STATES

The National Purpose

The search for a concise statement of the national purpose of the United States rivals the search for the meaning of winning. This is to be expected, because in the very long run, winning in the international struggle means the attainment of that national purpose. But in many respects, it should not be surprising that there is no such official statement. The broad consensus required to establish that objective would be difficult to achieve at any time, but in the modern world, torn by two world wars in the last fifty years, changed by almost unbelievable technological progress, and forced with fundamental differences of mutually exclusive political ideologies, it is even more difficult to discover a national purpose.

In his remarkably perceptive introduction to The City and Man, Professor Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago reveals the basic problems involved. "The crisis of the West," he says, "consists in the West's having become uncertain of its purpose. The West was once certain of its purpose--of a purpose in which

all men could be united, and hence it had a clear vision of its future as the future of mankind."⁷ Because of its relation to this discussion, Strauss' description of that vision is worth citing at length:

Philosophy or science should make possible progress toward ever greater prosperity; it should thus enable everyone to share in all the advantages of society or life and therewith give full effect to everyone's natural right to comfortable self-preservation and all that that right entails or to everyone's natural right to develop all his faculties fully in concert with everyone else's doing the same. The progress toward even greater prosperity would thus become, or render possible, the progress toward ever greater freedom and justice. This progress would necessarily be the progress toward a society embracing equally all human beings: a universal league of free and equal nations, each nation consisting of free and equal men and women. For it had come to be believed that the prosperous, free, and just society in a single country or in only a few countries is not possible in the long run: to make the world safe for the Western democracies, one must make the whole globe democratic, each country in itself as well as the society of nations. Good order in one country presupposes good order in all countries and among all countries.⁸

Even if one assumes that Strauss is correct in his assertion that the West has become uncertain of its purpose, there is much evidence to suggest that the uncertainty is temporary or superficial. If one reads the 1960 report of the Commission on National Goals,⁹ the public statements of the Presidents of the United

⁷Leo Strauss, The City and Man, p. 3.

⁸Ibid., p. 4.

⁹Henry M. Wriston, et al., Goals for Americans: The Report of the President's Commission on National Goals.

States,¹⁰ and other articles on the national purpose,¹¹ one can identify at least one common and fundamental idea. That is that there is a national purpose, and that it can be expressed in much the same terms as those used by Strauss to describe the purpose of the West before uncertainty set in. In its simplest terms it is much the same as Freedom as defined by the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant.¹²

The position taken in this thesis is that there is indeed a national purpose essentially as Strauss describes it; but this is not to say that it will ever be concisely expressed by the President or by Congress. So long as it remains a subject of discussion, and even controversy, it continues to act as a goal for broad consensus or unanimity. Furthermore, attainment of such a goal is obviously so far in the future that no harm is done by a lack of precise statement. Knowledge of its general character, which may be and is described in a variety of ways, is sufficient to permit the national purpose to serve its proper function in the world of today.

¹⁰See, for example, Woodrow Wilson, First Inaugural Address; Lyndon B. Johnson, State of the Union Message (1965); Lyndon B. Johnson, "Budget Message of the President," The Budget of the United States Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1967, pp. 7-35.

¹¹For example, Wilmot R. McCutchen, "The National Purpose," Military Review, Vol. XLV, Nov. 1965, pp. 13-17.

¹²See Carl J. Friedrich, The Philosophy of Kant, pp. xi-xlv, 191, et passim; the essay "Eternal Peace," pp. 430-476, is of special interest.

Knowledge of the national purpose is important because it acts to limit the kinds of objectives which the United States may set for itself, and the means by which the objectives may be obtained. For example, the national purpose--Freedom--serves to effectively restrain the United States from becoming an aggressor except in extremis; it also requires the United States to permit the existence in the world today of other nations with contrary doctrines and ambitions, provided these other nations do not become aggressors against the United States or other free nations. Thus to a large extent the national purpose causes the United States to actively assist other nations in attaining freedom by means other than war, and to undertake war only as a defensive measure against aggression.

So far as planning is concerned, however, it appears that although the national purpose influences other objectives, it is not in itself subject to planning. It exists in its own right, as it were, and is derived directly from a basic consensus of all the people of the nation, however intangible or imprecisely that consensus may be expressed.

Planning for direct action therefore involves other, better defined objectives which are feasible in the world of today. It is therefore appropriate to turn to a consideration of political and military objectives to see how the objectives can and should be formulated and expressed.

Political Objectives

The formulation and expression of political objectives are discussed first because of the proper supremacy of political over military considerations. In the United States this fact of political supremacy has particular importance. Even in the Colonial period, prior to the establishment of the Constitution, Americans have had a strong dislike and mistrust for standing armies.¹³ This dislike and mistrust became institutionalized in a peculiar way in the Constitution;¹⁴ and as we will see later, this fact has contributed in no small measure to the present concern over the meaning of winning.

In this discussion the objectives themselves are not so important as the answers to three specific questions: who formulates or should formulate political objectives in the field of international affairs? How are or should these objectives be formulated? And finally, what are the characteristics of these objectives which make them most useful for planning and subsequent action?

In our model for a modern democratic state, the legislature translates into rules of law the general programs endorsed by the electorate; programs which incorporate the broad objectives on

¹³Louis Morton, "Civilians and Soldiers: Civil-Military Relations in the United States." in Theory and Practice in American Politics, ed. by William H. Nelson, pp. 123-214.

¹⁴See Essays Nos. 8, 29, and 41 in Alexander Hamilton et al., The Federalist.

which the electorate has reached a consensus. In the administrative process the executive department translates these rules into criteria for government action, and conducts action in accordance with the criteria.

The process in the United States generally follows this model, although there are important points of difference in actual practice.

One could argue that, in general, political objectives are really set by the President working through the Secretary of State, and that this constitutes a point of difference from the model. Reflection, however, shows that this is not quite true. It is a proper, even necessary role of the Executive to formulate and submit to the legislature, for its approval, not only a clear expression of objectives, but also the proposed legislation to attain the objectives;¹⁵ this is what usually happens in the United States, and is brought about by the fact that the President and the agencies of the executive department have the only resources of government which are well equipped to perform this function. Congress through its approval or disapproval of authorization, appropriation, and substantive legislative measures has ample opportunity to modify objectives as required to coincide more closely with the consensus of the electorate; but this is true only if objectives are in fact clearly set forth. This is the real point of difference between the model and actual practice

¹⁵Maass, et al., op. cit., pp. 573-583.

in the United States. The work of the Commission on National Goals, and the program budget process are examples of steps taken to permit the legislature to perform its task better, but much improvement is still possible.

The third question posed above is perhaps most important in this thesis: what are the characteristics of objectives which make them most useful for planning and subsequent action?

To answer this question one must keep in mind the primary aim of the thesis which is to investigate the nature of winning in a military conflict. This implies that the objectives with which we are concerned must be those which are posed directly for an action agency.

Thus, while it is appropriate for objectives set in legislative action to be general in nature, it must be remembered that, in order to achieve such objectives, a wide variety of means may be employed in combination, and that the national government operates through a wide range of action agencies. From the broad objectives, which are set in legislation, are derived a coordinated set of other objectives, each of which is applicable to a particular action agency.

While it must be admitted that at any given time it may not be possible to express an objective in precisely the terms desired, it is apparent that, for action agencies, objectives are most useful for planning and for action if they have certain of the characteristics discussed earlier. For the most part the proper selection

of these desirable characteristics is obvious and requires little comment in explanation.

Although planning is properly concerned with long range as well as short range objectives, the uncertainties of the future severely limit the usefulness of long range objectives as a fixed goal for immediate action. The long range objectives and plans must be kept constantly in mind, of course, and adjusted as uncertainties are resolved, but the more precise and more certain short range objectives may usually be considered a more satisfactory guide for current action. When necessary, short range, intermediate goals are set both for planning and for action. Thus, at least for the duration of a particular operation, they also tend to be more constant, and thus help the agency to avoid the difficulties encountered in changing objectives in the course of the action.

Above all, however, it is most desirable that the objective be expressed in such terms that it is readily measurable. If it is too vague or abstract, one might well expect disagreement as to when or if it is really attained.

Military Objectives

Most of what was said about political objectives is also applicable to military objectives and need not be repeated. But, because of the nature of military action, and because of the recognition of military action as a means to achieve or help to achieve a political goal, there are additional factors to be taken into account.

In the United States, the President is chief of state, chief of government, and commander-in-chief of the military forces. Military action is one of the means available to him to assist in achieving the political goals in foreign affairs. In a very real sense, therefore, the military forces should be regarded as an executive agency, and not any more subject to the direct control of Congress than any other executive agency. One must, of course, beware of over-emphasizing this point, however. Because of the constitutional arrangements which provide for checks and balances to insure civilian supremacy over military power, and to insure that the President will not use the armed forces for personal aggrandizement, Congress does have very real power over the conduct of military affairs when it feels control is necessary.

By and large, however, it may be considered that the President is the proper authority for fixing military objectives in accordance with the broader political objectives normally fixed by the legislature. It goes without saying that the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their collective and separate capacities, the service secretaries and the Secretary of Defense act as advisers and planners for the President.

The use of military force, especially when actual combat is undertaken, is so expensive in terms of lives as well as other non-human resources that it is a particularly dangerous, and often treacherous tool of policy. The dynamism of military power,¹⁶

¹⁶See Osgood, op. cit., p. 17.

CHAPTER 4

WINNING

In previous chapters, winning was defined as the attainment of objectives; military winning was recognized as the attainment of military objectives; military action and military objectives were described as means or steps toward the attainment of political objectives; and the requirement for defining objectives, despite the difficulties involved, was noted. But thus far the discussion has been almost entirely theoretical; the significance of the reasoning can be best seen in light of real situation.

In this chapter, attention will be directed toward experience gained as a result of the policy of unconditional surrender in World War II, the objectives of the Korean War, and the current conflict in Vietnam. The significance of this idea of winning will be investigated in the context of a general nuclear war; and finally, comment will be made on other recent articles on subject of winning. Throughout the discussion, effort will be made to further clarify the relationship between political and military objectives, and to show how military objectives must always be regarded as subordinate to political objectives.

WORLD WAR II

During World War II, the Allies formulated a demand for unconditional surrender of the Axis nations.

This was a political goal set by the political authorities, and it was made, so far as we know, without any reference whatsoever to the military. Yet it had enormous implications for the military planners. It imposed upon them the requirement for a strategy of total destruction. In the case of Japan such a strategy was both unnecessary and unrealistic. Japan was already defeated and seeking a way out of the war. And we knew it. Acceptance of the Imperial system might have produced a Japanese surrender entirely satisfactory to the Allies, as it ultimately did, but the unconditional surrender formula could not be changed so late in the war.¹

This quotation describes succinctly one of the great controversies about political and military policies in one of the greatest wars the world has known. The results of the situation are well known. Plans were formulated to invade Japan in spite of expected heavy casualties. The atomic bomb was finally developed, however, and by destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the necessity of invasion was averted.

There are several significant points to be brought out from this experience.

First, whether the political goal of unconditional surrender was or was not a proper goal, it was clearly defined in terms about which there could be no mistake. With a goal of this sort, the military planner is not only enabled to plan a reasonably direct course to his objective, but he is also able to recognize precisely the point at which he has attained that objective. In other words, it is easy to know when winning has occurred.

¹Louis Morton, "Civilians and Soldiers: Civil-Military Relations in the United States," in Theory and Practice in American Politics, ed. by William H. Nelson, pp. 134-135.

Second, it points out the fact that military action is subservient to political action and political objectives. Had political objectives been different, the military objective would probably have been more limited.

Third, it emphasizes the requirement for proper selection of objectives, and illustrates in a way the dynamism of war. Because the political objective of unconditional surrender was formulated without full interplay of political and military action and objectives, it nearly led to much greater losses than would have been required by a negotiated settlement which would still be acceptable to the Allies.

THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 with the invasion of the Republic of Korea by the North Koreans; on 26 June 1950, an objective was established of driving the North Koreans back inside their boundary at the 38th Parallel.² When success in this effort followed initial setbacks, the political objective was changed to one of reunification of all of Korea,³ which in turn required a military objective of the capture of all of Korea. The entrance of Communist Chinese forces, and the forcing of United Nations forces to a line south of Seoul led ultimately to a situation

²Leilyn M. Young, "'Win'--Its Meaning," Military Review, Vol. XLVI, Jan. 1966, p. 30.

³Ibid., p. 31.

which was at least temporarily resolved by the armistice of 23 July 1953; the armistice left forces in place essentially along the 38th Parallel, the original limited objective.⁴

The Korean War differed from World War II in that it was essentially a limited war, fought for limited political and military objectives. Although the objective was once enlarged, and nearly attained, limitation in the forces and strategy which were authorized ultimately led to a stalemate which continues to this day. The experience embodies several points pertinent to the discussion.

Louis Morton, Professor of History at Dartmouth College, argues that "our political objectives in Korea--which are not easy to pin down--shifted with the fortunes of our forces on the battlefield, and that military considerations had as much or more to do with our actions than the political goals set by the policy-makers."⁵ This is undoubtedly true insofar as the struggle within Korea is concerned. But it also seems clear that a larger political objective of preventing a larger war led directly to the limitation of war in Korea, and that armistice was seen as a way of achieving this larger political goal, which, it may be argued, tended to conflict with but override a political goal previously set. If this is true, it is still clear that political goals remain dominant over military objectives.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Morton, op. cit., p. 135.

In many respects the Korean action resembles the situation described by Clausewitz--a situation which occurs when opponents are surprised by, or miscalculate the strength of the other:

Thus it comes to pass that the reciprocal action, the effort to outbid, the violence and irresistableness of war are lost in the stagnation of weak motives, and that both parties move with a certain kind of security in very reduced spheres.

If this influence of the political object on war is once permitted, as it must be /emphasis supplied/, there is no longer any limit, and we must put up with descending to such warfare as consists in a mere threatening of the enemy and in negotiating /emphasis in original/.⁶

The continuation of arguments about who won the Korean War, and the continuing expense of maintaining an uneasy truce in a divided country, as well as the hardships placed on a divided nation constantly threatened by war serve to show the difficulties which can ensue from changing both political and military objectives without being able to fully predict the consequence of the change. It is interesting, for example, to speculate on the present conditions in Korea, had the United Nations forces been held to their original objective.

It is clear that in terms of the proposed definition of winning, neither the United States nor the United Nations forces have won the war in Korea. Although the original goal was attained, that objective had been supplanted by another objective which has not yet been attained. Current military action is,

⁶Karl von Clausewitz, On War, p. 595.

of course, in support of the current political objective of waiting pending a final settlement. If reunification of Korea results from a final settlement, one could argue that military action made major contributions to that settlement, but winning is hardly an applicable term in this situation.

It is important to note, however, that even if one cannot claim a military win in Korea, a political win is still possible although it may be deferred for the time being.

Since World War II, and particularly since the Korean War experience, concern with the limitation of war has become increasingly apparent. The current war in Vietnam is a case in point.

THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The current conflict in Vietnam presents so many interesting aspects, but is so close to the present day, and apparently so far from its conclusion, that it can be discussed only in a general way. Space limitations also preclude a detailed account of the origins of the struggle.

The struggle in Vietnam, however, does serve to illustrate many of the points mentioned in this thesis. A good starting point for discussion is the speech made by Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th President of the United States, on 23 February 1966 in New York.

On the subject of what this thesis refers to as the national purpose, President Johnson had this to say:

Wendell Willkie--Franklin Roosevelt's opponent in the campaign of 1940--shared his belief that freedom could not be founded only on American shores or only for those whose skin is white. 'Freedom is an indivisible word,' he said. If we want to enjoy it, and fight for it, we must be prepared to extend it to everyone, whether they are rich or poor, whether they agree with us or not, no matter what their race or the color of their skin.

That was Republican policy 25 years ago. It was Democratic policy 25 years ago. It is American policy tonight.

The American forces of freedom are strong today in South Vietnam.

But we keep more than a specific treaty promise in Vietnam. We keep the faith for freedom.⁷

This implies, of course, that our other more specific political and military objectives in Vietnam should be in accordance with the national purpose of freedom for all people and all nations.

Thus, President Johnson stated that "our purpose in Vietnam is to prevent the success of aggression. It is not conquest; it is not empire; it is not foreign bases; it is not domination. It is to prevent the forceful conquest of South Vietnam by North Vietnam."⁸

In the struggle to achieve this objective, military forces are not employed alone. In Vietnam, more than in any other war in which the United States has engaged, political, economic,

⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson, "Text of Johnson's Address on Administration Policy in Vietnam," The New York Times, 24 Feb. 1966, p. 16.

⁸ Ibid.

sociologic, and all other elements of national power are being employed.⁹ The number of U.S. governmental agencies working in Vietnam is large, and problems of coordination are difficult.

But the question of most concern here is that of a military objective, for only if the military objective is known, will it be possible to determine at a later date whether the nation has won militarily.

Given the overall political objective--to prevent the forceful conquest of South Vietnam by North Vietnam--it might appear that the logical military objective would be to drive the enemy out of South Vietnam, and to prevent their return. (The precise strategy to be employed might have far reaching effects--particularly if all possible resources are directed toward an early decision--but it is beyond the scope of this thesis.) But it must be remembered that the war in Vietnam is admittedly a limited war to be fought for limited objectives.¹⁰ A measured use of force will be used to prevent "a mindless escalation" of the conflict.¹¹

This means that the political objectives are dominant to a very high degree, and that military objectives, and therefore military victory, may well be regarded as being entirely secondary in importance to other types of objectives. Indeed, as Louis

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

Morton pointed out, "By its very nature, limited war places a premium on political considerations and on solutions short of military victory."¹²

In light of this, it may well be that with the very high emphasis placed on political objectives, and on non-military action, military objectives cannot and should not be too precisely defined in advance of a military action; this in order that the dynamism of war will have little chance of developing to the extent that it degrades the primary emphasis on fundamental political objectives.

If this is true, then a broad military objective may not be set in terms which would permit a determination of military victory except in single, relatively minor actions or battles. In other words, discussions in terms of an overall military victory in the war in Vietnam may well be meaningless.

It may be tentatively assumed that experience with winning in Korea and Vietnam can be safely projected to other limited wars which may arise in the future, but what of general nuclear war?

GENERAL NUCLEAR WAR

The capability to wage general nuclear war demands that this thesis recognize a specific national objective--that of national security. The existence of this objective for any nation is so basic that it is immediately apparent. Even in the first century

¹²Morton, op. cit., p. 135.

B.C., Marcus Tullius Cicero, the great Roman orator, philosopher, and republican stated that:

A state ought to be so firmly founded that it will live forever. Hence death is not natural for a state as it is for a human being, for whom death is not only necessary, but frequently even desirable. On the other hand, there is some similarity, if we may compare small things with great, between the overthrow, destruction, and extinction of a state, and the decay and dissolution of the whole universe.¹³

These words have special meaning for the United States in light of its national purpose to be a leader in bringing about freedom for all people and all nations. Not only survival, but prosperity and peace are essential ingredients to the successful accomplishment of the mission; and these would not be possible--at least for a long time--if a general nuclear war were to occur.

Therefore, a political objective--and in many senses, a military objective--of the United States is to prevent such a war.¹⁴ To formulate a precise military objective from this political objective, however, the strategy becomes important. For example, a strategy of deterrence may result in a military objective simply of maintaining a certain level of forces at a certain state of readiness. Winning is technically achieved on a continuing basis when the forces are thus adequate to deter general nuclear war.

¹³Cicero, *De Re Publica*, iii, 23, 34.

¹⁴U.S. Army War College, *What Does it Mean to "Win"?*, p. 41. See also George E. Wear, "National Strategic Concepts and 'Winning'," in *US Army War College Occasional Papers* (24 Sep. 1965), p. 13.

It should be noted, however, that in the absence of conflict it would be difficult to really assess a win in terms of the definition proposed, because the opponent may choose not to undertake such a war for other reasons. Winning in a military sense by a strategy of deterrence, therefore, seems to become merely an academic exercise.

Winning in a political sense, however, does have meaning because of the dominance of the political objective and its attainment--no war.

But what if a general nuclear war does occur? Consideration of this question leads directly to a comparison of the idea of winning set forth in this thesis with certain other recently expressed thoughts on the subject.

OTHER IDEAS OF WINNING

In discussions among military men, the idea is often advanced, that in a general nuclear war both sides would lose. In a sense this is correct. The destruction to all participants would be enormous, and might bring them to the very brink of survival. But such a proposition appears to be more subjective than objective. In any war, all participants pay a heavy price in terms of resources diverted to a destructive purpose. To this extent, all participants lose something. In a nuclear war they would simply lose more. Even the winner might become the object of attack by what was formerly a weak power, but which with the end of the war between its neighbors has suddenly become the

strongest of surviving nations. But if such an attack occurs only after the results of a nuclear engagement are known, it is essentially a different war, and might better be regarded as such.

While the ideas set forth in this thesis permit a ready answer to those who say that both sides must lose in a general war, the argument should not be concluded without looking at certain other recent ideas on winning, specifically those referred to in the introduction.

The argument that ends by equating winning with freedom¹⁵ has much of interest in it. But from the viewpoint of this thesis the point is improperly stated. As has been shown here, the objective of the nation is freedom; the attainment of that objective is what really constitutes winning--and even then, winning is so far in the future, that for the world of today, the concept of winning as freedom is useful only as a broad guide for our actions and faith.

Colonel Leilyn M. Young, a member of the U.S. Army War College Class of 1965, has written a thoughtful paper entitled "Win--Its Meaning in Crisis Resolution."¹⁶ In it, he studies four situations: the Korean conflict; the Lebanese intervention; the Thailand deployment; and the Cuban missile crisis. He concludes that winning in a military situation short of general war

¹⁵Robert B. Rigg, "What Does it Mean to Win," Army, Vol. 16, Feb. 1966, p. 49.

¹⁶Young, op. cit.

means a return to the status quo ante. Despite the arguments for and against the fact that this is indeed precisely what occurred as a result of these actions, it seems that establishment of an objective such as "a return to the status quo ante" is of questionable value in terms of the argument of this thesis. Such an objective is usually not only vague, but in a very real sense is not attainable. The forces employed in any military operation of the sort described, and the reactions of participants and observers in the international arena, clearly result in changed conditions at the conclusion of the operation.

The three arguments just mentioned are only a few of many recent ones which have been advanced. But they seem to be representative of efforts to date; and lack of space precludes discussion of others.

The argument advanced in this thesis obviously cannot be expected to settle the controversy; but it is hoped that the argument and its summarized conclusions which follow will serve to stimulate further effort to resolve the basic problem: "What does it mean to win?"

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This attempt to find the meaning of winning in international contests started from the basic premise that winning could be defined as the attainment of the objectives set by the nation. Nothing developed in the course of the argument has served to invalidate that premise. Instead, the approach serves to focus attention on the objectives of the struggle, and leads to two important conclusions.

The first of these is that in any assessment of winning, the supremacy of the political objective over the military objective must be kept constantly in mind. In many respects, international affairs may be viewed as entirely political, and military action should be viewed only as a means to achieve the political goal.

The dominant position of the political objective is most important in limited war; and because this is so, it may be that military objectives cannot be clearly discerned far in advance of a specific action. If this is the case, military victory in the classic sense, or as it was viewed in the unconditional surrender objective of World War II, may not be applicable in modern wars waged with limited forces, by limited strategies, for limited objectives. Military efficiency might not, under these circumstances, provide useful criteria for determining when a war has

been won. In limited wars, political means may be even more important than military means in the long run.

The second conclusion is that even though the quality of military winning may seem to have changed in limited wars, it is still a useful concept. It is useful because it focuses attention on the objectives. Military objectives must be set in accordance with the dominant political objectives; and to the extent that the compatibility of these objectives is not clear, the concept of winning presented in this thesis demands even greater effort to discover the true objectives for which the action is undertaken. By focusing attention on the objectives, and by requiring that they be known before a specific action is taken, the concept helps to insure reasonable action; it helps to restrain and limit the natural dynamism of war fought for its own sake instead of for the political goal; it also forces a careful assessment of the appropriateness of military action to achieve its objectives.

These conclusions have deep implications for military and non-military planners in the United States Government. The long range effort to attain the national goal of freedom for all peoples and nations; the requirement to place national security at the top of the list of immediate and continuing national objectives; and the high priority, continuing objective of preventing a nuclear war, all seem to be compatible; but they are particularly troublesome in the face of the current conflict

between communism and democracy, and even more troublesome in light of the Chinese Communist threat to freedom of nations throughout the world.

These objectives are all continuing objectives with different natures. One sets a positive goal; the other two are more negative in that they seek to prevent certain actions. Even though the security of the United States is insured on a continuing basis, and even though no general nuclear war takes place, the attainment of these objectives is not finally possible until the national purpose also becomes a reality, and the dangers of general nuclear war or other attack disappear in the general climate of freedom. In our time, these goals cannot be won.

Thus the conclusions suggest that a change of emphasis is necessary for both military and non-military planners. There is a need to clear away the trite and clichéd formulations of winning and victory.

Winning should be recognized for what it is--the attainment of an objective. This means that before one plans a strategy for winning, he should know precisely what he wants to win; he should insure that he has the means to win it before he undertakes the action; and he must also realize that within realistic planning periods, certain objectives are not really attainable--that therefore, one should not be overly concerned with trying to establish an artificial concept of winning such objectives in the short range.

All of this suggests that planners should give the highest priority to the establishment of reasonable political objectives, expressed in terms clear enough to be the basis for integrated planning of the use of all means, which can properly and effectively contribute to the attainment of those political objectives. It also suggests that military planners should more clearly recognize the supremacy of political objectives; that they should advise the Commander-in-chief of the capabilities of military action to contribute to the attainment of political objectives, and in so doing help to insure that military action is not improperly undertaken.

Above all, it seems that the military planner, recognizing the supremacy of political objectives, should also recognize that military objectives, set for military action in the world of today, may not result in grand victories in the Napoleonic style. In some international conflicts, it could well be that military action is the least important, and even the least noted of the means employed to attain national objectives. But so long as emphasis is placed on establishing the right and proper military objectives, one can expect victories to be gained--by squads and companies, if not by grand armies.

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